

EVALUATING THE PROBABLE REACTIONS TO THE LANDING IN NORTH AFRICA IN 1942: A CASE STUDY*

BY HADLEY CANTRIL

This is an anecdotal account of a study made by the author in 1942 to gather information on North African attitudes toward an allied landing there. It is one of a number of studies by the author, mostly done in collaboration with Gerard B. Lambert for President Roosevelt during World War II, that illustrate what policy research can accomplish if the researcher has the opportunity to work closely with those who are faced with the problems and with the responsibility of making the decisions on which action must be taken.

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ON FEBRUARY 18, 1942, two officers from the Psychological Warfare Branch of Military Intelligence, Colonels Percy Black and Oscar Solbert, came to Princeton to discuss various psychological warfare problems with me. One of the questions they asked was whether I thought it feasible to try to gather systematic information in North Africa prior to a possible allied landing there. I told them that, in view of the demonstrated reliability of small samples of opinion, if we could count on the cooperation of those who would have to become involved in such an undertaking, there was a good chance we could get information of value.

Accordingly, a number of conferences were held in Washington, State Department approval for the undertaking was obtained, and I compiled a list of Americans already in North Africa representing various departments and agencies who would be both useful and highly reliable. It was felt that the safest method to get the study underway was to communicate both our intentions and our plan to some American who would shortly be returning from North Africa on routine duty. A consul, whom I shall call Robert Langrock, was due home for a short period in mid-March. Accordingly, he was conscripted for the indoctrination and came to see me at Princeton along

*Throughout the whole undertaking, the advice and assistance of Leonard Doob, then with the Psychological Warfare Branch of Military Intelligence, was most helpful.

with Major Henry Cumming, also of the Psychological Warfare Branch. Mr. Langrock never visited my office but stayed in a room at the Nassau Tavern for the few days he was in Princeton, while I explained to him the problem, the concept of sampling opinion, and how the information wanted must be obtained by indirect questioning.

Details concerning objectives, precautions, interviewer instructions, and a code for transmitting results if they could not be returned by hand were prepared the next week in Washington, with the assistance of Mr. Lambert and Major Cumming. The sample was designed to weight various population groups with respect to their military importance. Messages were also sent to military attachés in two other areas indicating they should be prepared to ask some systematic questions of a sample of people. These messages were meant to serve as blinds in case suspicion was aroused in North Africa.

The initial memorandum Lambert and I submitted to Colonels Black and Solbert in late March 1942 stated the problem as we understood it, indicated some precautions and over-all instructions, gave detailed instructions to interviewers, specified the questions and the sample, and indicated a code to use if replies could not be brought back by hand. Some excerpts from this memorandum are noted below.

OBJECTIVES OF SURVEY

These are the objectives as understood by Cantril and Lambert:

1. To discover the degree of opposition or cooperation that might be expected in case of invasion by a strong United States force.
2. The reasons for opposition or cooperation should be obtained as accurately as possible.
3. Attempts should be made to discover what steps would be most effective in diluting opposition or promoting cooperation in each district and within each group.

SOME TECHNICAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN MAKING A SURVEY OF THIS KIND

In interpreting the results of this work the difference between this survey and standardized surveys in a democracy should be borne in mind. These differences are as follows:

1. Separate populations and possible differences in the opinions of these populations are, in this instance, much more important than is usual where the emphasis is generally on a single over-all figure.
2. In this instance there is a direct and highly practical relationship between opinions and objectives. Therefore, every effort must be made to weight the opinions of various populations or groups in terms of their importance in determining action.

3. The geographical location of each group with respect to action must be properly weighted. A consolidated figure of all groups might be misleading and obscure important differences.

4. Public opinion surveys as we have come to know them in free countries can in large measure employ straightforward methods and questions. In this instance, obviously, indirect methods of interviewing and asking questions and noting answers must be devised.

5. In spite of these variations from normal circumstances, it is believed that the results of these data will afford a higher degree of accuracy than it is possible to obtain under any other system of reporting.

This expectation is reasonable because: (a) the groups to be interviewed will be carefully chosen in advance; (b) the questions for those groups are uniform; (c) the use of a battery of questions framed in advance, all of which, directly or indirectly, are aimed at obtaining a single answer, affords maximum opportunity to obtain this answer; and (d) the rapid collection of data throughout the whole area assures greater accuracy with respect to the indication of current opinion on which action is to be based.

In order to increase the practical value of this survey for military action, it is strongly recommended that certain supplementary work be done. Plans should be made at once to initiate, simultaneously with the survey here, surveys in two or three other territories which could logically be considered open to military action. These supplementary surveys would not be designed to gather information. Their purpose would be to allow the enemy to discover that inquiries were being made in these areas. In this way discovery of the actual survey planned above—if such discovery is made—would be accompanied by reports of similar surveys elsewhere with resulting confusion as to where action is really coming from.

OVER-ALL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Interviewing must be conducted within each area with respect to the important groupings of the population in that area. "Importance" must be defined here in terms of the objective in mind.

2. The information obtained from each group should be adequate and reliable so the opinions of each group may be separately reported.

3. It should be carefully noted what emphasis and importance is placed by the people of different groups on different questions. This will give us information on the intensity of feeling in addition to the direction of opinion.

INSTRUCTIONS TO INTERVIEWERS

1. It is absolutely essential that you be as conversational, casual and informal as possible in your approach.

2. The conversational approach will be aided considerably if you open up with a few completely blind and irrelevant questions which you can determine yourself on the spur of the moment and which will get you en rapport with your respondent by discussing problems of perhaps local and mutual interest.

3. You should feel that it is not absolutely essential for you to repeat the questions given you word for word. In many, if not almost all, instances, this would make for a very clumsy and awkward interview.

You should simply try to guide the conversation around to the topics covered with these questions and try to keep the conversation on each area covered until you feel you have obtained an accurate impression of the point of view of your respondent. There are eight questions in the survey and you might find it helpful in recalling these questions during your conversation if you memorized eight key words such as "winner—citizen—motives—disastrous—invading—military," etc.

Cover the questions in whatever order seems most natural during the particular conversation in which you are engaged.

4. You should record the answers each person gives you just as soon as possible *after* conversation is finished. Ideally, a record should be made of each interview before going on with another interview, although in many instances this may be impossible because of the social situation you find yourself in.

Write out just as fully as you can and, insofar as possible in the respondent's own words, the interview you have had.

5. Before you terminate your conversation, be sure you feel that you have the person's opinions on all questions. Otherwise you may find later on that although you have a good deal of information it is not pointed to the questions of interest.

6. Be sure to include in your report of each interview a brief characterization of the respondent—his nationality background, his occupation, his status or rank, his age, and any personal characteristics you think would be of value in interpreting the results—such as, his economic views, his family ties, your impression of his integrity, his sophistication, etc.

7. Be sure you do not interview anyone who has been or will be interviewed by other men in your area. If you are interviewing in the identical locality as another person, arrange your interviews together and in advance.

8. At the end of your record of each interview try to summarize in your own words your impression of the respondent, your guesses as to his reasons for holding the opinions he does if you think there are reasons he has not given you or is not perhaps aware of himself. Be sure to indicate what action you think he would really take under the circumstances of interest to us in this inquiry.

9. Do not take any chances during your interview if you believe suspicions are being aroused or if the person is being uncooperative. Do not force answers to any questions.

But be sure to report how many incomplete interviews you had or how many people you started to interview but did not follow through with at all. When indicating the number of incomplete interviews you had, be sure to make a note of the types of persons with whom your interviews were incomplete.

10. You have been given the assignment of getting a certain number of people of a certain type or in a certain group or groups. It is *absolutely es-*

sential that the persons you interview within a single group should not be members of a small clique within that group or should not all be persons who just happen to be friends of yours. In other words, we want, insofar as possible, to get a random sample within each group interviewed for the obvious purpose of avoiding any uniform bias if any personal selective factor enters in.

11. If you find yourself pressed for time and feel you will not be able to complete all the assignments given you, select for completion the persons whose opinions you think are most important from the point of view of the problem in which we are interested.

12. If you get special relevant information you regard as important from certain persons not fitting the sample, or persons of special importance or authority, make a special report of this with proper identification and append to your survey report.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED TOGETHER WITH SUPPORTING RATIONALE

A. In the long run, which side do you think will win the war, or do you think it will end in a stalemate?

B. Which side would you like to see win the war? (This question should be a good opener. It should also reveal the fundamental desires of the respondents and indicate in a fairly innocuous way the direction his actions might take in a critical situation.)

C. (To be asked of French military and civilians): If you could not be a Frenchman what other country would you choose to be a citizen of? (Here we are getting at the relative affection for different countries. Furthermore, by judging the difficulty the respondent may have in making his answer, we may be able to evaluate his loyalty to France and gather to what extent he has already been thinking about this question. It will be important to follow the simple answer to this question with details concerning his reason for his new choice.)

D. What do you think of the United States as the country to be a citizen of? (This question will be asked, of course, only if the respondent has not indicated the United States in Question C. We want to find out here what respect the respondent has for the United States, what misgivings and disillusionments he may harbor and what unfavorable attitudes the United States is encountering and should try to counteract.)

E. Do you believe the United States has some selfish and imperialistic motives concerning your territory, or do you think the United States has no interest in controlling this area of the world? (Here we want to see if the respondent makes any distinction between the concept of an interdependent world operating on a cooperative basis as contrasted to the Nazi concept of an interdependent world dominated by one or two peoples.)

F. From the point of view of your own future what country's domination of this territory would be most disastrous to you personally? What would be best for you? What would be next best? (It is important to discover, insofar as possible, the very personal motivation of the respondent. How will his own

military or civilian career be affected by various domination? What domination would most upset his economic and family life, etc.)

G. What would be your attitude if Vichy ordered resistance to any invading army? (This is a leading question and the respondent will no doubt first say the answer to this depends on what country the invading army represents. We also want to know, if possible, if he thinks in terms of relative strength of invading armies in determining his answers. That is, if he knew a strong German force were coming in would he resist any more or less than if he knew a strong U.S. force were coming in?)

H. What do you think would be the determining factors in any military operation in your territory? (Here we want to know if the respondent is thinking in terms of certain military factors such as superior airforce, superior numbers, etc., or whether he is thinking chiefly in terms of local morale on the part of civilians, military, etc.)

A code was prepared in case it seemed advisable to send answers by telegraph or other shorthand methods. This proved unnecessary, since results were brought over by an army officer.

The sample, designed with the help of various persons in Military Intelligence familiar with the regions involved, was intended to follow as closely as possible the known distribution of French military personnel. The sample we sought consisted of 68 commissioned officers, distributed by army, air force, and navy; 82 noncommissioned officers similarly distributed according to their numbers in the different armed forces; 62 civilians and 9 native leaders—a total of 221 in all being the aim. All these groups were further specified by area. For the purposes of our sample, North Africa was divided into four areas that intelligence experts thought important.

Mr. Langrock returned to North Africa, indoctrinated 27 reliable Americans in the purpose and method of the undertaking, and managed to return 142 detailed and usable interviews from Casablanca, Spanish Morocco, and Tangiers by July 1. The complete sample could not be filled because of various administrative difficulties encountered and because of the general caution it was clearly wise to observe in many instances.

Mr. Langrock and the twenty-seven colleagues he conscripted and briefed for the job seem to have faithfully followed the instructions for interviewing. Some of them had acquaintances who satisfied the categories in the sample they were assigned; more often, they found an excuse to talk with the type of person specified. All those who did the job already had a number of contacts who could help them get introductions on one pretext or another. All interviewing was in the form of casual, relaxed conversations, and notes were privately made on each conversation before another conversation was launched.

A summary of results was submitted in a report to Military Intelligence (with a copy sent to the President) on July 16. The following day I was asked to give an oral briefing of the whole procedure and the conclusions to members of the intelligence planning board of the General Staff. The summary read as follows:

IN CASABLANCA

Among both civilian and military personnel, the majority thought the Allies would win, and almost 90 per cent wanted to see them win.

The United States is looked on most favorably as a country to live in. Germany is regarded by three-fourths of the people as the country whose domination of the territory would be most disastrous to them. Eighty per cent believe the United States does *not* have any imperialistic interests in French Morocco.

If Vichy ordered resistance to an invading army, the survey shows that the majority of civilians (70 per cent) would not resist an invasion by the Allies. Among the military personnel, however, two-thirds indicated they would resist, although there are signs that many of these would resist only half-heartedly if the invading force were strong and if Allied propaganda made it clear that the invasion was not designed for imperialistic motives but only to defeat Germany and thus help restore France.

It is important to note that invasion by British forces would meet considerably more resistance than one composed only of United States forces. A total of 38 per cent of military and civilian personnel indicated that they would either not resist the United States, would resist all except the United States, or would help the United States. Britain is regarded unfavorably by a considerable number on several counts: traditional antagonism toward Britain and her navy, the feeling in some quarters that Britain deserted France, and mistrust of Britain's imperialistic motives.

There is also indication that an invasion force should *not* contain Gaullists.

Some typical reports received were as follows:

"French Captain. Truthful, spoke very frankly the first time I met him. A valuable source of information on native affairs, military and political. Feels should either try pre-arranging, if possible, a separatist Moroccan State here, or otherwise attempt to take Morocco by surprise (as much as possible)—Don't send English (possible exception, French Canadians) or Gaullists—Aside from coast landings should also come down from Spanish Morocco to nullify any danger from rear—*Now* is the time to take over Morocco."

"French Colonel. Truthful. Very anti-German, recognizes only hope for France is thru America. Not anti-English, but anti-English Foreign Politics. Blames America also for her long isolation. Believes America should come here *now*, while the time is ripe. Civilians would welcome Americans, armed forces would probably start resisting, but with powerful American forces would soon and gladly give up."

"French Commander. Truthful. Very Nationalist. Represents the collaborationist element in the Navy. Very anti-English and very suspicious of

Americans now relative to Martinique. Very anti-Russian. Cannot understand why Americans who were supposed to be friends of France can't control Martinique as they were supposed to have been doing thru surveillance instead of threatening to seize it. No confidence in Anglo-Saxons after they destroyed France's security after the last war. No arguments seem to succeed in turning him from collaborationist views. He says that England has been as much of a harm to France's interest as Germany, and in any case France was beaten by Germany this time, so France might as well save what is left even if thru collaboration with Germany because at least for the present Germany is not dismembering French Empire as are the Anglo-Saxons."

IN SPANISH MOROCCO AND TANGIERS

Here only a small minority—20 per cent—think the Allies will win; almost 30 per cent look for a German victory and about half of the population doesn't know what to think. These results become more meaningful when seen against the background of desire: almost 50 per cent of those interviewed either wanted Germany to win, didn't care who won, or wanted a stalemate. Those who didn't care about the outcome indicated that a clear victory for either side would be disastrous to the present Spanish government. There was great horror among the military personnel of Communist domination of Spain.

Only 3 per cent felt the United States had any selfish or imperialistic designs on Spanish Morocco. Germany and Russia were considered about evenly as the country whose domination would be most disastrous. If ordered to resist an invading army, 100 per cent of the military personnel said they would obey orders, while 60 per cent of the civilians indicated they would.

Two typical comments in reply to specific questions were:

B. Which side would you like to see win the war? Has no preference either way provided the victor does not interfere too much with Spain. States that Spain has always been under British influence since she lost her colonies and has nothing to show for it. States it would not make much difference if Spain were under German influence for a change, but he would not like too much interference with internal matters.

E. Do you believe the United States has some selfish and imperialistic motives concerning your territory, or do you think the United States has no interest in controlling this area of the world? No, thinks the U.S. is not interested in Spanish Morocco except as a market for their goods.

The most significant finding from the study was the discovery that a landing composed solely of American ground troops would without doubt meet less resistance than an invasion that also involved British troops, because of the suspicion at the time by (Vichy) French military personnel that the British might have some imperialistic aims in entering French North Africa, as well as lingering memories of past wars with England.

In his book of memoirs, Captain Harry C. Butcher noted on July 31, 1942:

The CG [Eisenhower] said that his discussions with General Marshall indi-

cated that the PM looked upon the African assault as an American operation to or around Casablanca on the west coast, and as primarily a British operation on the north coast—but to be led, at the time of the landing operations, by American troops for such psychological advantages as might be gained from the French.¹

In *The Hinge of Fate*, Sir Winston Churchill cited the following message from Roosevelt dated August 30, 1942:

President Roosevelt to Former Naval Person. . . . I feel very strongly that the initial attacks must be made by an exclusively American ground force, supported by your naval and transport and air units. The operation should be undertaken on the assumption that the French will offer less resistance to us than they will to the British.

I would even go so far as to say I am reasonably sure a simultaneous landing by British and Americans would result in full resistance by all French in Africa, whereas an initial American landing without British ground forces offers a real chance that there would be no French resistance, or only a token resistance.²

The invasion of November 7 followed this plan and met with "token resistance." The *New York Times* of November 8, 1942, began its story (dated November 7) with the following sentence:

Powerful American forces, supported by British naval and air forces, landed simultaneously tonight at numerous points on the Mediterranean and Atlantic coast of French North Africa, launching effective second front assistance to Russia and forestalling an anticipated invasion of Africa by Germany and Italy, President Roosevelt announced tonight.

Since the results indicated a suspicion on the part of a number of military and civilian personnel that a successful invading army would permanently take the territory captured away from those who now controlled it and add its country to the long list of countries that had dominated various parts of North Africa in its checkered history, it seemed imperative that every effort be made to assure both the military and civilian personnel of North Africa that the United States had no ulterior or imperialistic designs. It had to be quite clear that the United States and her Allies were forced to this action to prosecute the war successfully for the ultimate good of France and her colonies and to prevent a German invasion of the same territory and possible long-term German occupation. This point was emphasized to the Psychological Warfare Branch of Military Intelligence in July, when the report of findings was transmitted.

Two concrete suggestions were made, based on the idea that, in making the purpose of the invasion clear to all Frenchmen and North

¹ Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1946, pp. 36f.

² Winston Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1950, pp. 531-532.

Africans, the greatest credibility to any such statement would come from voices already well known and trusted by the French.

One of my close friends at Princeton during the war was Fernand Auberjonois, then a Swiss citizen, who was in charge of short-wave broadcasting to France for the National Broadcasting Company, who had been broadcasting to France for some time on a program that had wide coverage in France, and whose fan mail from France I had analyzed. It occurred to me that Auberjonois should be involved in the initial announcement of the invasion when the time came. Accordingly, Auberjonois became an American citizen, was made an officer in the Army, and was eventually assigned to General Eisenhower's task force. He was on one of the ships that first landed American troops during the invasion, a ship with special radio transmitting facilities. As the landing took place, he explained it to the French, identifying himself to them in a voice they recognized.

The second suggestion was that the American voice best known and most respected by France—that of the President—should explain in his own words (and in French) what the landing was all about. I felt it important that a recording be made in advance of the President's statement, since some contingency might arise at the crucial time to prevent his speaking, and an advanced recording could also be utilized by the British Broadcasting Corporation or other facilities outside the United States.

The *New York Times* report of the landing stated in its third and fourth paragraphs:

The President made the announcement even as the American forces, equipped with adequate weapons of modern warfare, he emphasized, were making the landings.

Soon he was speaking direct to the French Government and the French people by short-wave radio and in their own tongue, giving assurances that the Allies seek no territory and have no intention of interfering with friendly French, official or civilian. He called upon them to cooperate in repelling "the German and Italian international criminals."

The *Washington Star* reported some of the details of the preparation of the President's message in its issue of November 10, 1942, as follows:

President Roosevelt was said today to have composed himself the speech in French which informed the world that our armies were taking North Africa into protective custody. . . . The President's speech was recorded under circumstances of the strictest secrecy some time ago. The actual recording was made at the White House.

The text of Roosevelt's message to the French was printed on page 1 of the *New York Times*, November 8, 1942.

The study described here illustrates an attempt, under rather difficult conditions, to learn something about the "first person" point of view, or the "reality worlds," of people whom one is trying to understand and whose behavior one is trying to predict. Once the researcher gains some insight on how the other fellow perceives a situation, without superimposing his own perceptions or categories of judgment, then, obviously, a more effective course of action can be designed to bring about the consequences desired or, at least, to avoid mistakes that will make this impossible.